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The Vikhelic Arts

The Vikhelic Arts (known in Telluria as "martial arts") are dedicated to Sai Vikhë, the Janya of combat. They were particularly necessary for the defence of the Empire at the time of the Outlander Wars and are widely practised in time of peace. Indeed Vikhelic arts hold the place in Aristasia that sporting activities like football or baseball hold in Telluria, although team games like these also exist in Aristasia.

It has been questioned why brunettes in Aristasia practise and follow the Vikhelic arts so assiduously. In old Japan the Samurai practiced martial arts because they needed to defend themselves and their lord in a very warlike environment. However, in The Motherland maids do not kill maids and there is no internal war.

In answer to this question, we may pose another: since kicking, batting, throwing, rolling and otherwise manipulating spheroids is in no way related to the survival of Tellurians, why do they spend so much time doing it?

The Vikhelic Arts in The Motherland are to an extent more like ball games in the sense that they do not relate directly to survival.

To an extent only, of course, because they do ultimately have a defensive function and also a ritual or quasi-religious aspect; and they are (but much more rarely than in Telluria) used in anger between brunettes. The absolute taboo is on killing (and on organised mass conflict), not fighting per se. Even so, physical fighting with intent to hurt is not at all normal - and is usually much more formal. An impromptu scrap or brawl is very rare - a challenge to honourable combat less so. Sometimes the dividing line between normal sporting activity and a "fight" is a tenuous one.

Nonetheless most combat is pure sport, even though (like any sport) it may have an element of rivalry and of group loyalties. However great these may be (and even in a "fight" between two angry brunettes), combat is conducted with impeccable manners and with a high degree of ritual observance. So much so that the combination of civility and joint participation in sacred formality, combined with "letting off steam" often help to repair the original anger - as does

the fact that after a contest the loser must behave with humility and grace; the winner with generosity and grace. Not to do so would mark one as a outlandish cad. One may compare the impulsion to behave in this honourable way with a) the dictates of "sportsmanship" in traditional Western Telluria and b) the ritual considerations of more Eastern Tellurian nations. It is something akin to a fusion of the two. And one must also remember that thamë (the proper or "golden" ordering of things) cannot be called exclusively "social" or "religious" in the Western Tellurian senses. It combines the two seamlessly.

The Vikhelic Arts came into prominence in Aristasia from the beginning of the current Era (that is, from the time of the Outland Wars and the founding of Caire, over three millennia ago: the present year (2008/09 in Telluria) is 3328). The realisation that the universe could be a dangerous place and that Aristasians must, if necessary, be ready to defend themselves increased the Vikhelic element in Aristasian culture. Since then all nations have had military institutions, even though most of them have not fought for generations and have largely ceremonial functions (as well as being called on in times of natural disaster or other crises).

The Vikhelic stream of feeling and activity is naturally present in Aristasia. After all, Sai Vikhë is one of the ((The Seven Great |Seven Great Janyati)) and her influence is a part of life. In Aristasia, the lack of warfare and the rarity (and dishonour) of violence mean that Vikhelic inclinations find most of their outlet in the regular practice of the Vikhelic Arts. That is possibly why these arts hold the place in Aristasian culture that ball games hold in Tellurian culture.

There are ball-games in Aristasia too, but they are less prominent. They are especially associated with blonde schools and with private activities, such as tennis parties, rather than with public entertainment. Brunettes certainly play them as well, but they are less ubiquitous. Blondes also practice Vikhelic Arts, but much less than brunettes. Almost every brunette in The Motherland knows some Vikhelic Art at least to an elementary degree. With blondes in is more a question of a minority who have a special interest.

Estate also plays a role, but it is quite a complex one. A (brunette) member of the Raihira Estate is most likely to be proficient in the Vikhelic Arts. In some traditional societies (and modern traditional families) a Raihira brunette must know a specified number of Vikhelic Arts. In Rayapurh, for example, the Seven Arts of Chivalry were Swordsmaidship, Horse-mounted combat, Archery, the use of the Long- and Short-rive, Weaponless combat on the ground, Weaponless combat on the raised arena (different rules applied and ground-combat was more characterised by leaping and striking) and the Quarterstaff. The number and constituents varied from place to place.

Naturally firearms come into the equation in the West, but

are often not considered a true Vikhelic Art, presumably because a) they are not of ancient lineage and b) they cannot be used in any form of ritualised combat. However, since b) also applies to archery, a) is probably the predominant reason. Nonetheless, any Westrenne Raihira brunette is expected to shoot straight if called upon to do so.

The case of Raihira blondes is more complex. In some cultures and families Raihira blondes should know at least one blonde-suitable Vikhelic Art, in others a "high-born blonde" is considered too delicate for such things, and while a Magdala or even a Paccia blonde might practice a little, a Raihira blonde would not.

As for the Haiela, in some cultures all Haiela , blonde and brunette, are debarred from Vikhelic practice, in others it is only from the use of weapons, or of edged weapons. In some cultures there are Vikhelic Arts of a particularly contemplative nature (and all Vikhelic arts have a contemplative element) practised only by certain members of the Haiela.

See Also

Sai Vikhë

The Vikhelic Principle

The Way of the Sword

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